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Governor Newsom Issues Executive Order for November 3, 2020 General Election

SACRAMENTO, CA – Governor Gavin Newsom has signed Executive Order N-67-20, the second executive order issued to prepare for the administration of California’s November 3, 2020 General Election during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many county elections officials have expressed concerns about meeting in-person voting requirements given the strain of the pandemic on voting locations and poll worker recruitment. Per the order, county elections officials that cannot provide the levels of in-person voting typically required by state law will be required to offer a minimum of one in-person voting location for every 10,000 registered voters beginning October 31, the Saturday before Election Day.

[Click here to view Executive Order N-67-20.](#)

"The health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic will be felt well into the fall and we must prepare the November General Election accordingly," Secretary of State Alex Padilla said. "Since the outset of the pandemic, I've called for sending every registered voter a vote-by-mail ballot while maintaining as many safe in-person voting opportunities as possible. Observing elections in other states during this pandemic has only reinforced the wisdom of this approach. Expanded vote-by-mail, coupled with ample in-person voting on and before Election Day, is the best formula for maintaining the accessibility, security, and safety of our election. In-person voting locations are crucial to providing critical services, including accessible machines for voters with disabilities, language assistance, Same Day Voter Registration, replacement ballots, and more. Ultimately, the more Californians who vote early—either by mail or in-person—means shorter lines, smaller crowds, and a healthier experience for voters and poll workers on Election Day."

"This executive order provides the immediate clarity necessary for elections officials to properly prepare for the general election. The COVID-19 pandemic has already presented enormous challenges for election administration. Many poll workers and voting locations utilized in prior elections will not be available this fall. Election administrators will need the support of state and local governments, as well as the private sector, to identify and secure more suitable voting locations and to recruit new poll workers," Padilla added.

"I commend Governor Newsom and Secretary of State Padilla for moving decisively to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike the president, the leadership in California has worked diligently

to protect the people's right to vote," Senator Tom Umberg said. "The executive order—along with Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423—will ensure that Californians will not be disenfranchised by the pandemic. We will empower the people of California by providing reliable sanitary, in-person voting locations with access to valuable services like Same Day Voter Registration, language assistance with ballots, disability assistance with voting, and more. With safe polling places and a vote-by-mail ballot option, we can assure that the voters' right to participate in elections is protected, and their voice will be heard."

"I commend the Governor for taking swift action to implement key parts of the comprehensive legislative package announced last month to ensure that this November's election is conducted in an open, accessible, and safe manner," Assemblymember Marc Berman said. "Today's executive order makes clear that Governor Newsom and Secretary of State Padilla support the policies included in Assembly Bill 860 and Senate Bill 423, jointly authored by myself and Senator Umberg. That clarity will allow county elections officials, community organizations, and voters to move forward now in planning for the November election with the certainty that the Legislature, the Governor, and the Secretary of State have a shared vision for the policies that will apply to the general election. While we don't know exactly how widespread COVID-19 will be this fall, the policies outlined in these bills and this executive order will help protect both the public's health and every voter's right to vote."

In-Person Voting On and Before Election Day

Per the Governor's Executive Order, counties that cannot provide the levels of in-person voting typically required by state law must open a minimum of one in-person voting location for every 10,000 registered voters beginning the Saturday before Election Day.

The in-person voting locations in the 15 Voters Choice Act counties will continue to be Vote Centers that can be used by any voter in the county. The in-person voting locations in non-Voter's Choice Act counties will be consolidated precincts, with each voter having an assigned voting location.

Any counties that cannot provide the levels of in-person voting typically required by state law will also be required to have a minimum of one ballot drop-off location for every 15,000 registered voters starting 28 days before Election Day. Secure ballot dropboxes qualify as a ballot drop-off location.

As is already the case, in-person voting opportunities will still be available in county elections offices starting 29 days before Election Day.

Voting Location and Poll Worker Support

County elections officials need assistance this year to identify and secure voting locations suitable for social distancing, and to replace experienced poll workers who are identified as more vulnerable to COVID-19.

The Governor's Executive Order:

1. Clarifies that counties can use disaster service workers to support election operations.

2. Reminds public facilities — particularly schools and colleges — that they are to offer their space to be used as voting locations or ballot drop-off locations free of charge.
3. Urges the private sector and non-governmental organizations to consider offering locations for in-person voting and to assist with poll worker recruitment.

Expansion of Ballot Tracking Tools

The Governor's Executive Order requires every county to implement California's "Where's My Ballot?" tracking tool. "Where's My Ballot" allows voters to sign up at wheresmyballot.sos.ca.gov for automatic updates on the status of their vote-by-mail ballot by text (SMS), email, or voice call.

The executive order also requires that counties include intelligent mail bar codes on vote-by-mail ballot envelopes, to provide better tracking for voters.

Changes in Elections Legislation

Secretary of State Alex Padilla is in support of AB 860 and SB 423.

"Senator Umberg and Assemblymember Berman's critical legislation will help to protect voting rights and facilitate the administration of this November's General Election. As we expand vote-by-mail statewide and face uncertainty with the service levels of the U.S. Postal Service, providing more time for the processing and counting of vote-by-mail ballots is a smart move to fortify our elections," Padilla added.

AB 860 and SB 423:

- Require that county elections officials process and count ballots that were postmarked on or before Election Day and arrive to elections officials no later than 2 days before certification of election results. Under current law, vote-by-mail ballots that arrive more than 3 days after the election are not counted.
- Allow county elections officials to begin processing returned vote-by-mail ballots 29 days before Election Day. Under current law, counties can begin processing vote-by-mail ballots 10 business days before an election. Results will still not be released until after all polls close on Election Night.

